

# The Home News

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## Editorials

### Are drums safe or dangerous?

There's a disturbing conflict between what the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection are saying about the threat of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals at the old Duane Marine Salvage Corp. site in Perth Amboy. A third agency, the Middlesex County Health Department, is saying it doesn't know anything about the situation, and no one has told the city of Perth Amboy anything.

Here's the scenario of two days last week:

On Wednesday, the federal EPA ordered Duane Marine and 34 other waste generating companies to remove 4,000 drums of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals from the Duane Marine warehouse, the site of a major fire in 1980. The EPA, describing it as a "hazardous situation," said the chemicals are leaking into the Arthur Kill.

On Thursday, the state DEP said there was little if any leakage from the barrels. A spokesman said most of the chemicals were burned up in the fire or their contents "boiled down to a stable residue." The barrels still there are empty, the state spokesman said.

Further, neither agency has kept either the county Health Department or the city of Perth Amboy informed about the situation, despite the fact the city asked both the state and federal governments for help in clearing and cleaning the land so that it could plan for ratable development.

"Once we called in those agencies, it was incumbent upon them to monitor the situation," said City Council President Armand Cannamela. If there are chemicals still at Duane Marine, the city has not been told. County officials also complained that they not been kept abreast of developments.

If the federal EPA is wrong, it has served only to scare the public; if the state DEP is wrong, it has allowed a dangerous leakage of toxic chemicals to go unattend.